

Parshas B'Shalach in a Nutshell

(Exodus 13:17-17:16)

Soon after allowing the children of Israel to depart from Egypt, Pharaoh chases after them to force their return, and the Israelites find themselves trapped between Pharaoh's armies and the sea. G-d tells Moses to raise his staff over the water; the sea splits to allow the Israelites to pass through, and then closes over the pursuing Egyptians. Moses and the children of Israel sing a song of praise and gratitude to G-d.

In the desert the people suffer thirst and hunger, and repeatedly complain to Moses and Aaron. G-d miraculously sweetens the bitter waters of Marah, and later has Moses bring forth water from a rock by striking it with his staff. He causes manna to rain down from the heavens before dawn each morning, and quails to appear in the Israelite camp each evening.

(continued next column)



When the Jewish people left the land of Egypt, they showed absolute faith and trust in G-d. As the prophet relates: "Go and call out in the ears of Jerusalem: 'I remember for you the grace of your youth, the love of your bridal days as you followed after Me in the desert, in an uncultivated land.'" The Jews journeyed out to the desert with little more than the packages of dough they could carry on their backs. A people numbering several million went into the desert with no provisions!
-- The Rebbe

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The children of Israel are instructed to gather a double portion of manna on Friday, as none will descend on Shabbat, the divinely decreed day of rest. Some disobey and go to gather manna on the seventh day, but find nothing. Aaron preserves a small quantity of manna in a jar, as a testimony for future generations.

In Rephidim, the people are attacked by the Amalekites, who are defeated by Moses' prayers and an army raised by Joshua. ❖

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The Baal Korei, and
The Security Volunteers*

**This week's
Kiddush is
sponsored by the
Ginsburg family in
honor of Joey's
Bar Mitzvah**

**Join us each weekday
morning Mon-Fri as we
delve into the mysteries of
Chassidic concepts.
5:55 am, followed
immediately by Shacharis.**

Halachic Zmanim

Shabbos, Jan 15, 2022
Eastern Standard Time

Earliest Tallis 6:18 AM
Latest Morning Shema..... 9:40 AM
Earliest Mincha (Gedola) 12:31 PM
Plag Hamincha..... 3:57 PM
Earliest Evening Shema.... 5:24 PM

Anshei Lubavitch Congregation

Rabbi Levi and Leah Neubort

Adult education:

Rabbi Avrohom and Rivky Bergstein

Youth Outreach:

Rabbi Eli and Ruty Steinhauser

Shabbos Schedule

Erev Shabbos – Jan 14 / Shevat 12

Candle Lighting.....4:34 pm

Mincha4:35 pm

Shabbos Day – Jan 15 / Shevat 13

Shacharis..... 9:30 am*

Torah Reading 10:40 am

Kiddush 12:15 pm

Mincha4:35 pm

Rabbi's Drasha.....5:00 pm

Shabbos Ends5:38 pm

**Latest morning Shema is now 9:40 AM. Be sure to recite the Shema at or before that time (even if at home).*

Weekday Schedule (not on a holiday):

Minyan

Shacharis (Mon-Fri)6:15 am

Shacharis (Sunday) 9:00 am

Mincha (Sun-Thurs)1:45 pm

Maariv (Sun-Thurs)9:15 pm

Bulletin

*This week's Bulletin
is sponsored by
The Shul .*

Chassidic Masters

Amalek

*Based on the teachings of
the Lubavitcher Rebbe
Courtesy of MeaningfulLife.com*

*The people of Israel journeyed . . .
and they camped in Rephidim . . .*

*[Moses] named the place
“Challenge and Strife,” because of
the strife of the people of Israel and
their challenging of G-d, saying, “Is
G-d amongst us or not?”*

*Then came Amalek and attacked
Israel in Rephidim . . .
-- (Exodus 17:1–8)*

*Remember what Amalek did to you
on the road, on your way out of
Egypt. That he encountered you on
the way, and cut off those lagging
to your rear, when you were tired
and exhausted; he did not fear G-d.
Therefore . . . you must obliterate
the memory of Amalek from under
the heavens. Do not forget.
-- (Deuteronomy 25:17–19)*

The Jewish people had just experienced one of the greatest manifestations of divine power in history. Ten supernatural plagues had compelled the mightiest nation on earth to free them from their servitude. The sea had split before them, and manna had rained from the heavens to nourish them. How could they possibly question, “Is G-d amongst us or not?”

Yet such is the nature of doubt. There is doubt that is based on a rational query. There is doubt that rises from the doubter’s subjective motives and desires.

But then there is doubt pure and simple: irrational doubt, doubt more powerful than reason. Doubt that neutralizes the most convincing arguments and the most inspiring experiences with nothing more than a cynical shrug.

Such was the doubt that left the Jewish people susceptible to attack from Amalek. Amalek, in the spiritual sphere, is the essence of baseless, irrational indifference. In the words of the Midrash:

To what is the incident (of Amalek) comparable? To a boiling tub of water which no creature was able to enter. Along came one evildoer and jumped into it. Although he was burned, he cooled it for the others.

So, too, when Israel came out of Egypt, and G-d split the sea before them and drowned the Egyptians within it, the fear of them fell upon all the nations. But when Amalek came and challenged them, although he received his due from them, he cooled the awe of the nations of the world for them.

This is why Amalek, and what he represents, constitutes the archenemy of the Jewish people and their mission in life. As Moses proclaimed following the war with Amalek, “G-d has sworn by His throne; G-d is at war with Amalek for all generations.” Truth can refute the logical arguments offered against it. Truth can prevail even over man’s selfish drives and desires, for intrinsic to the nature of man is the axiom that “the mind rules over the heart”—that it is within a person’s capacity to so thoroughly appreciate a truth that it is ingrained in his character and implemented in his behavior.

But man’s rational faculties are powerless against the challenge of an Amalek who leaps into the boiling tub, who brazenly mocks the truth and cools man’s most inspired moments with nothing more than a dismissive “So what?”

The Bottleneck

Amalek attacked Israel “on the road, on [the] way out of Egypt,” as they were headed toward Mount Sinai to receive G-d’s Torah and their mandate as His people. Here, too, history mirrors the inner workings of the soul: the timing of the historical Amalek’s attack describes the internal circumstances under which the pestilence of baseless doubt rears its head.

In the Passover Haggadah we say: “In every generation one must see himself as if he personally came out of Mitzrayim.” Mitzrayim, the Hebrew word for Egypt, means “narrow straits”; on the personal level, this refers to what chassidic teaching calls the “narrowness of the neck” which interposes between the mind and the heart.

Just as physically the head and the heart are joined by a narrow passageway, the neck, so it is in the spiritual-psychological sense. For while the mind possesses an innate superiority over the heart, it is a most difficult & challenging task for a person to exercise this superiority — to direct and mold his feelings and desires to conform with what he knows to be right.

(Continued next page)

This is the “Exodus from Mitzrayim” that is incumbent on each and every generation: the individual challenge to negotiate the narrow straits of one’s internal “neck,” to overcome the material enticements, the emotional subjectivity, the ego and self-interest which undermine the mind’s authority over the heart and impede its influence on the person’s character and behavior.

As long as a person is still imprisoned in his personal mitzrayim, he faces many challenges to his integrity. As long as he has not succeeded in establishing his mind as the axis on which all else revolves, his base instincts and traits—such as greed, anger, the quest for power and instant gratification—may get the better of him. But once he achieves his personal “Exodus” from the narrow straits of his psyche, once he establishes his knowledge and understanding of the truth as the determining force in his life, the battle is all but won. He may be confronted with negative ideas and rationalizations, but free of the distortions of self-interest, the truth will triumph. He may be tempted by negative drives and desires, but if in his life the mind rules the heart, it will curb and ultimately transform them.

But there remains one enemy which threatens also the post-Exodus individual: Amalek. Amalek “knows his Master and consciously rebels against Him.” Amalek does not challenge the truth with arguments, or even with selfish motivations; he just disregards it. To the axiom, “Do truth because it is true,” Amalek says, “So what?” Armed with nothing but his chutzpah, Amalek jumps into the boiling tub, contests the incontestable. And in doing so, he cools its impact.

Beyond Reason

How is one to respond to Amalek?

How is one to deal with the apathy, the cynicism, the senseless doubt within?

The formula that the Torah proposes is encapsulated in a single word: Zachor—“Remember.”

In his Tanya,⁴ Rabbi Schneur Zalman of Liadi discusses the faith in G-d that is integral to the Jewish soul. Faith is not something that must be attained; it need only be revealed, for it is woven into the very fabric of the soul’s essence. Faith, continues Rabbi Schneur Zalman, transcends reason. Through faith one relates to the infinite truth of G-d in its totality, unlike the perception achieved by reason, which is defined and limited by the finite nature of the human mind.

Thus Rabbi Schneur Zalman explains the amazing fact that, throughout Jewish history, many thousands of Jews have sacrificed their lives rather than renounce their faith and their bond with the Almighty—including many who had little conscious knowledge and appreciation of their Jewishness, and did not practice it in their daily lives. At their moment of truth, when they perceived that their very identity as Jews was at stake, their intrinsic faith—a faith that knows no bounds or equivocations—came to light, and overpowered all else.

Amalek is irrational and totally unresponsive to reason; the answer to Amalek is likewise supra-rational. The Jew’s response to Amalek is to remember: to call forth his soul’s reserves of supra-rational faith, a faith which may lie buried and forgotten under a mass of mundane involvements and entanglements. A faith which, when remembered, can meet his every moral challenge, rational or not. ❖

Shabbat Shirah

The Maharal of Prague would instruct the teachers of young children to gather their students in the shul yard on Shabbat Shira and relate to them the story of Kriat Yam Suf — the splitting of the sea. They were also to tell the children that at that time Hashem performed a miracle: Trees with beautiful fruit grew in the sea (see Midrash Rabbah 22:1). When the Jews sang the Shirah, the birds sang and danced. The Jewish children picked fruits from the trees and fed the birds. To commemorate this event, we put out food for the birds Erev Shabbat Shirah.

From Our Sages

G-d said to Moses: “Why do you cry out to Me? Speak to the children of Israel, that they should go forward” (Exodus 14:15)

As they stood at the shore of the sea, the people of Israel split into four factions.

One faction said: “Let us cast ourselves into the sea.” A second faction said, “Let us return to Egypt.” A third said, “Let us wage war against the Egyptians.” A fourth said, “Let us cry out to G-d.”

These “four factions” represent four possible reactions to a situation in which one’s divinely ordained mission in life is challenged by the prevalent reality.

One possible reaction is: “Let us cast ourselves into the sea.” Let us submerge ourselves within the living waters of Torah; let us plunge into the “sea of the Talmud,” the sea of piety, the sea of religious life. Let us create our own insular communities, protecting us and ours from the G-dless world out there.

At the other extreme is the reaction, “Let us return to Egypt.” Let us accept “reality,” recognizing that it is the Pharaohs who wield the power in the real world. We’ll do whatever we can under the circumstances to do what G-d expects from us, but it is futile to imagine that we can resist, much less change, the way things are.

A third reaction is to “wage war against them”—to assume a confrontational stance against the hostile reality, battling the “unG-dly” world despite all odds.

A fourth reaction is to say: It’s wrong to abandon the world, it’s wrong to succumb to it and it’s wrong to fight it. The answer lies in dealing with it on a wholly spiritual level. A single prayer can achieve more than the most secure fortress, the most flattering diplomat or the most powerful army.

G-d rejected all four approaches. While each of them has their time and place (it’s important to create inviolable sancta of holiness in a mundane world; it’s also necessary to appreciate the nature of the prevalent reality and deal with it on its own terms; it’s also necessary to wage an all-out war against evil; and it’s always important to recognize that one cannot do it on one’s own and to appeal to G-d for help)—none of them is the vision to guide our lives and define our relationship with the world we inhabit.

Rather, when the Jew is headed toward Sinai and is confronted with a hostile or indifferent world, his most basic response must be to go forward.

Not to escape reality, not to submit to it, not to wage war on it, not to deal with it only on a spiritual level, but to go forward. Do another mitzvah, ignite another soul, take one more step toward your goal.

And when you move forward, you will see that insurmountable barrier yield and that ominous threat fade away. You will see that the prevalent “reality” is not so real after all, and that you have it within your power to reach your goal. Even if you have to split some seas to get there.

-- (The Lubavitcher Rebbe)

They believed in G-d and in Moses His servant (Exodus 14:31)

One who believes in Moses believes in G-d.

-- (Mechilta) ❖

Haftorah for B'Shalach in a nutshell

Judges 4:4-5:31

This week's haftorah describes the fall of the Canaanite general Sisera and his armies, who were swept away by the Kishon River, and Deborah's ensuing song of thanks. This parallels this week's Torah portion which discusses the drowning of the Egyptian forces in the Red Sea and the subsequent songs led by Moses and Miriam.

Deborah the Prophetess was the leader and judge of the Israelites at a difficult time; the Israelites were being persecuted by King Jabin of Canaan and his general Sisera. Deborah summoned Barak son of Abinoam and transmitted to him G-d's instruction: "Go and gather your men toward Mount Tabor, and take with you ten thousand men of the children of Naphtali and Zebulun. And I shall draw to you, to the brook Kishon, Sisera, the chieftain of Jabin's army, with his chariots and his multitude; and I will give him into your hand." At Barak's request, Deborah accompanied him, and together they led the offensive.

Sisera was informed of the Israelites' mobilization and he gathered his forces and proceeded towards the Kishon River. Barak's army below and the heavens above waged battle against the Canaanites and utterly destroyed them. The river washed them all away; not one of the enemy survived.

The defeated general fled on foot and arrived at the tent of Jael, wife of Heber the Kenite. She invited him in and offered to hide him. When he fell asleep, Jael took a tent-peg and knocked it through Sisera's temple.

The next chapter of the haftorah is the Song of Deborah, which describes the miraculous victory and thanks the One Above for His assistance. ❖

Book-Signing at Shomrei Torah

Shomrei Torah invites you on Motzei Shabbat, January 15 at 8:00pm for a book signing and conversation with Rabbi Chaim Jachter and Rabbi Andrew Markowitz about Rabbi Jachter's 3 most recent books.

A light dairy dinner will be served. Admission fee: \$10, Optional sponsorship for an additional \$20. Optional "Meet and Greet" with Rabbi Jachter is available before the event for an additional \$40. Books can be pre-ordered or purchased at the event.

For more information, please contact tuesdaystorah@yahoo.com. All books will be personalized. Reservations can be made online at www.shomrei-torah.org/event/natepjachter

שבת שלום גוט שבת!



Gutt Shabbos to all!